



M E D I A R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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STATE MAKING PROGRESS IN COMPLYING WITH 'BRIAN A.' SETTLEMENT MONITOR RELEASES DETAILS OF DCS IMPROVEMENTS

NASHVILLE – The Department of Children's Services is progressing more quickly in laying the groundwork necessary to improve the state's child welfare system than any time over the last three years, monitors charged with grading the Department's progress said today.

The Technical Assistance Committee (TAC), which is charged with monitoring and grading DCS response to the stipulations laid out in the "Brian A." settlement agreement, made the statement in a report filed in U.S. District Court.

"The Tennessee Department of Children's Services has made more progress this year in building the foundation and infrastructure necessary to improve outcomes for families and children than in any other year since the entry of the Settlement Agreement," the report states, "and in certain key areas, more progress has been made in the past six months than in the preceding three and a half years."

The "Brian A." settlement agreement between the state and the plaintiff's attorneys was approved by the federal court in July 2001.

"The monitor's report acknowledges our staff's commitment and hard work in trying to better serve the children in state custody and their families," DCS Commissioner Viola Miller said. "While we're fully aware of the challenges that remain before us, we are both encouraged by, and proud of, the accomplishments cited in this report."

The report also cites areas in which improvements are still needed, such as Child Protective Service (CPS) functions and case manager case load levels. The department already is working on improvements in those and other areas of concerns cited, Miller said.

Members of the TAC include Steven D. Cohen, senior associate with the Annie E. Casey Foundation; Carolyn Lapsley, division director for the Alabama Department of Human Resources; Judy Meltzer, deputy director for the Center for the Study of Social Policy; Andy Shookhoff, associate director of the Vanderbilt Child and Family Policy Center; and Paul Vincent, director of the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group.

The complete monitor's report can be viewed on the DCS Web site in the newsroom spotlight section at www.tn.gov/youth.

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The Tennessee Department of Children's Services was created in 1996 through legislation to provide the best possible care for children and youth in state custody, or those at risk of entering custody, and their families. Services provided by DCS include child protective services, foster care, adoption, programs for delinquent youth, probation/aftercare, and treatment and rehabilitation programs for identified youth.

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